

## House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

### What's New To Darien, Old News In Other Communities



*By State Representative John J. Ryan*

Unfortunately, we are rapidly running out of 2005 long before we have run out of legislative issues and topics that we could discuss this year. And Christmas music has already started on the radio, more than a week before

Thanksgiving! (I assume that eventually someone will want to pass a law on that topic also). And now I have yet another reason to remind people that what happens at your State Capitol in Hartford is important to follow, with the recent news stories that an 'affordable housing' proposal has finally come to Darien.

While the affordable housing topic may be a new one here, it is not a new statute. The law allowing what is in effect, a unit density override to local housing zoning regulations for affordable housing purposes passed as Public Act 89-311, so it has been in effect for 16 years now. It seems like yesterday that I was discussing with my distinguished predecessor as State Representative, Reg Jones, the many unattractive features of this law which creates a large hole in the ability of a town to make its own zoning decisions. The issue of affordable housing is a legitimate and important one, directly linked to crucial issues like traffic congestion and economic development. However, the approach of this law, in allowing a developer that designs an application that fits within the statutory parameters, to be able to cram a high-density project in a neighborhood where local zoning would not otherwise allow it, is all wrong in my viewpoint.

I also practice what I preach, and together with many of my House Republican colleagues, have voted in the past to attempt to repeal the law, to amend it, to change various provisions, and every time in vain (as Casey Stengel said "you can look it up"). But I also believe in not misleading constituents by telling them whatever they may want to hear to placate them, because the fact is that the law has been on the books for years, has been utilized in other towns to create hundreds of units, and has already been the subject of considerable litigation in our Connecticut courts. Further, the political reality is also clear; efforts to undo or substantially change the law have failed by a wide margin. So whether I like it or not, this flagrant undoing of 'local control' policies has been consistently supported by the legislative majority.

I tried to stress to our local press that have asked about this topic, that the 1989 law does not create an open-ended loophole; a local land-use commission still has to hear an

application in the same manner, and review other relevant issues as to traffic, safety, environmental and other concerns in making their decision. Unfortunately, if you share my viewpoint that this law does not represent the right approach for encouraging the creation of affordable housing, you need to work to elect similarly-minded legislators!

And on happier topics, as a regular reader you have noted that the topic of encouraging job creation and economic development in our cities is a vital issue. Governor Rell's recent announcement that AC Cars, Great Britain's oldest sports car company, has committed to build its first U.S. manufacturing facility in Bridgeport, creating 141 jobs, and occupying a 40,000 square foot facility is therefore, welcome news.

One last thought for the upcoming holiday season: if you are interested in helping Connecticut servicemen overseas and their families here in our state, look into how you can assist in OperationE.L.F. (Embracing Lonely Families) by going to its website at [www.opertationelf.com](http://www.opertationelf.com) or calling 1-800-858-2677. While enjoying your Thanksgiving with your family, please consider giving a moment to those serving our country who will not be able to get together during this holiday season!

Please feel free to contact me with your concerns and issues. As your state representative, it is my job, and my priority to represent you and to make sure that your needs and concerns are addressed at the capitol. You can write to me at Room 4200, Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT 06106-1591, send me e-mail at [John.Ryan@housegop.state.ct.us](mailto:John.Ryan@housegop.state.ct.us) or call my office toll-free at 1-800-842-1423.